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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal spirit, source of all wisdom, as Senators strive to make critical decisions, guide their hearts and minds. Give them such courage of conviction that they will ignore the siren calls to deviate from right. Help them to walk along ethical paths, even when they are demonized by insiders and outsiders.

Deliver them from those who impugn their motives and misrepresent their intentions. Remind them that You are the only constituent who ultimately matters, and that pleasing You must be their first priority. May they trust You to open doors that no one can shut and to shut doors that no one can open. Help each of us to say no to every voice that invites us to leave Your way.

Lord, empower us to hasten the day when the knowledge of You will cover the Earth as the waters cover the seas.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 8, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SUNUNU thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, is the distinguished Senator from Hawaii here ready to give a speech?

Mr. AKAKA. Yes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield to him and reserve my leader time.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with the first half of the time to be controlled by the Democratic leader or his designee and the second half of the time to be controlled by the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Hawaii.

TRADITIONAL ROLE OF FEMA

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, my thoughts are with all of those from the Gulf Coast States affected by Hurricane Katrina as they mourn the loss of

family and friends and neighbors. We wish them well.

I know there are no words that can provide the needed comfort. I believe there must be an extensive examination of what went wrong with the Government's response to this natural disaster.

As hundreds of thousands of Americans look toward rebuilding their lives, our first priority must be to ensure that all possible Federal resources are at their disposal. However, it is Congress's job to get to the bottom of what went wrong and to do whatever is necessary to ensure that it never happens again. I join those who say we must not engage in a blame game but, rather, we must come together to undertake responsible oversight.

I say this from an interesting vantage point because throughout the debate over the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, I repeatedly expressed my strong concern that nonhomeland security functions of the Federal Government would be diminished if included in the new Department. I said that eliminating the Federal Emergency Management Agency's status as an independent agency to join this proposed Department could seriously affect FEMA's traditional role of responding to natural disasters.

At Under Secretary Michael Brown's confirmation hearing to be Deputy Director of FEMA in June 2002, 5 months before the Homeland Security Act passed, I spoke about the perils of converting FEMA into a homeland security centric agency. At the time, I said:

The President's proposal for a new Department of Homeland Security will include the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A key question is how will this new role for FEMA in homeland security affect its traditional mission?

... Many of the agencies impacted by this proposal, including FEMA, have a number of core responsibilities unrelated to their homeland security missions. Most of what FEMA does every day, and what Americans

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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